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ABSTRACT

This bulletin for kindergarten teachers comprises five papers about the use and value of play in the kindergarten curriculum. Topics discussed include the values of various pieces of indoor and outdoor play equipment commonly found in the kindergarten; the nature of young children and their learning; the definition of play; the teacher's role as manager, observer, designer, evaluator and leader of children's play; the use of experiences with clay, including personification of clay forms, to make children aware of their own developmental phases; and the use of play to stimulate children's thinking and improve their approaches to problem solving. These papers are intended to encourage kindergarten teachers to reexamine the kindergarten curriculum and incorporate some of the suggestions into their classes. A questionnaire for the reader's evaluation of the bulletin is included. (Author/SS)

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KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM ISSUES

Play

PS 010677

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KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM ISSUES

P L A Y

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Bulletin No. 8063

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page No.

1. Play - It's Not a Dirty Word 1
   Priscilla Kesting, Ph.D.

2. Play in the Kindergarten: A Clarification 9
   Agnes E. Griffith, Ph.D.

3. The Teacher's Role When Children Play 21
   Pat Schwanke

4. Clay - Play, You, Me and Others 33
   David C. Davis, Ph.D.

5. Problem Solving in Play 41
   Pat Schwanke

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The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction wishes to express sincere appreciation to the authors who have freely contributed these issue papers on PLAY for distribution to Wisconsin public school kindergarten teachers. Without their dedication, hard work and expertise, this publication would not have been possible.

Appreciation is also expressed to the members of the Kindergarten Teacher Advisory Panel who served as an advisory and reaction panel to the Supervisor of Early Childhood Education. The panel members have spent many hours of work critiqueing the issue papers and providing advice on curriculum and program issues in kindergarten education.

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PREFACE

Play is the most worthwhile activity of children. It incorporates exploration, imitation, movement, manipulation of objects, interaction and language from which the young child gains knowledge and understanding of self and the world around him/her.

Play is the medium through which young children learn. The kindergarten curricular subject area concepts are developed through play. Cognitive activity and play cannot only co-exist in the curriculum, but play can become the vehicle for accomplishing curriculum goals.

This bulletin is written to reintroduce and remind kindergarten teachers of the value of play and its importance in the kindergarten curriculum.

Dr. Priscilla Kesting presents, in a unique way, the values of various pieces of indoor and outdoor play equipment commonly found in the kindergarten. Dr. Kesting reminds kindergarten teachers to take time for play in a kindergarten day to promote and expand growth in the various curricular areas.

Dr. Agnes Griffith states that play in the kindergarten is an issue in need of clarification. She believes that the young child can learn through thoughtfully chosen play activities. She discusses the nature of the young child and his/her learning, and the definition of play.

Pat Schwanke presents a model which reflects a philosophy both eclectic and assertive about the teacher's role when children play. The teacher is a manager, observer, designer, evaluator and leader.

Dr. David Davis gives a play-material unit to show how a teacher can extend and vary experiences with clay to make children aware of the developmental phases in growth through the personification process.

The concluding paper, also by Pat Schwanke, takes the position that problem solving is evident in all types of children's play. Teachers can create a climate for problem solving and the stimulation of more complex levels of children's thinking.

It is hoped that, after reading these articles on play, the kindergarten teacher will be encouraged to re-examine the kindergarten curriculum and incorporate some of the suggestions in his/her classroom. It is also suggested that these articles be shared with colleagues, administrators and parents.

Sue Ann Bates

PLAY - IT'S NOT A DIRTY WORD!

By

Priscilla Kesting, Ph. D.
University of Wisconsin-Stout

INTRODUCTION

No, "play" is not a dirty word; yet in kindergartens today it is a word which is often used in couched terms. The term "free play" may have been replaced by "self-selected activities" or "flexible learning stations." Moving away from using the word "play" has probably not occurred because kindergarten teachers no longer believe in it as a most effective way of providing appropriate learning experiences for young children; rather, the term has come to mean that a kindergarten program may be negatively traditional in its curricular approach, or that the term has been used by non-early childhood educators as the equivalent of a non-learning, non-academic environment. It is important, therefore, for kindergarten teachers to take the position that including time for play in a kindergarten day in no way inhibits learning in reading readiness, mathematics, science and language development but expands growth in these and other curricular areas.

The purpose of this article is to present generally accepted values for the various pieces of indoor and outdoor play equipment commonly found in kindergarten classrooms. The information is presented in a simple reference format so that early childhood educators might have the information easily accessible when working on curriculum and public relations with other faculty members, principals and/or parents; otherwise, spreading the good word about all the valuable types of learning which goes on in a kindergarten. Sharing such information as this will put

kindergarten teachers in a more offensive posture regarding the value of play and the provision of time for the utilization of play equipment at the kindergarten level.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's bulletin, Kindergarten: Experiences in Living and Learning (page 1), begins with the statement:

> "As Early Childhood Educators,
> We Believe That:
> A young child learns
> through the medium of
> play."

Further on in the publication (pp. 8-9), the importance of play is again stressed, together with the inclusion of a chart which provides some examples of the values of various pieces of play equipment in terms of large and small muscle coordination, quantitative thinking, conceptualizing symbols, aesthetic appreciation and language development. The subsequent play equipment values which will be presented here are supportive of, and extend the information in the Department of Public Instruction kindergarten bulletin.

INDOOR EQUIPMENT VALUES

ART MATERIALS

Clay - provides an opportunity for creative or aesthetic experience of a dimensional, changeable medium.
- encourages the release of emotional tensions while calling for direct use of the imagination.
- provides a direct sensory experience.
- utilizes hand muscles in manipulating clay and accompanying small tools.
- provides a restful activity while seated which allows for relaxing play within a social situation.

Crayons - provide an opportunity for creative and aesthetic expression involving meaningful use of color and design.
- enable a child to interact in a restful situation where social interacting and sharing of materials can occur easily.
- provide a means for hand and eye coordination, a skill very much needed for later formal writing.
- provide an outlet for emotional tensions and for gaining satisfaction.

Easel Painting - provides a combined muscular and visual experience in which hand, eye, arm and torso muscles are all involved.
- provides opportunity for gaining control in using a medium for constructive effects and which also allows for creative and emotional expression.
- teaches large form relationships as well as an appreciation for and knowledge of design and color, including the effect one color has on another when mixed or used in conjunction with other colors.

Finger Painting
- allows for spontaneous, creative expression through exploration with color, texture and design.
- allows for emotional release for child who has a need to be messy in an approved manner.
- coordinates finger, arm, eye, and back muscles.
- provides for social interaction while completing an individual activity.

Paste and Scissors
- provide an excellent

eye-hand coordination experience which can involve both concentration and social interaction as well as emotional satisfaction and creativity.

BLOCKS

- provide for muscular activity and help to foster coordination.
- allow for dramatic and social interaction which reproduces real-life situations on a smaller scale.
- provide an outlet for creative expression in balance and design.
- can increase a child's awareness of number, weight, size and shape.
- provide emotional satisfaction by allowing child to control a situation.

BOOKS

- help to expand child's knowledge of the fantastic world we live in.
- foster the development of language expression vocabulary, imagination and appreciation for good use of color and design.
- provide a restful activity while seated, as an individual experience in a social situation.
- increase child's awareness that printing progresses from left to right.

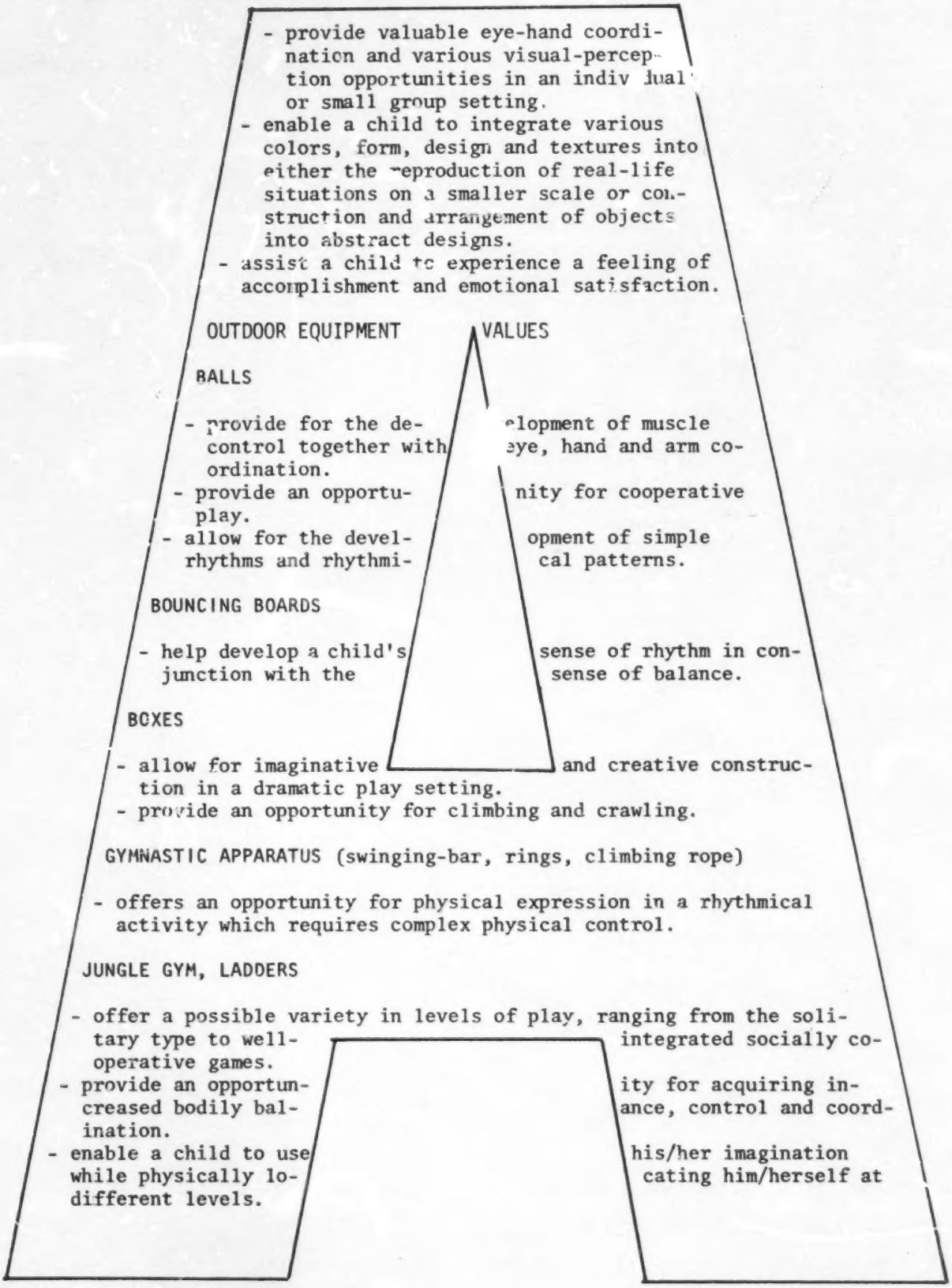
HOUSEKEEPING MATERIAL

- provides an opportunity for dramatic play which enables child to identify with adult roles.
- provides an outlet for emotional tensions, feelings, anxieties and disturbing experiences.
- provides an opportunity for combining thought language and action with others while clarifying individual experiences.

RUNABOUT TOYS (trucks, cars, trains, boats)

- provide for active physical activity which serves as a good supplement to creative and dramatic play.
- provide an opportunity to clarify and expand upon the child's concept of real-life situations and experiences.

TABLE TOYS (cubes, beads, parquetry sets, lotto sets, small animals, peg boards, puzzles)


- provide valuable eye-hand coordination and various visual-perception opportunities in an indiv dual or small group setting.
- enable a child to integrate various colors, form, design and textures into either the reproduction of real-life situations on a smaller scale or construction and arrangement of objects into abstract designs.
- assist a child to experience a feeling of accomplishment and emotional satisfaction.
OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT
VALUES
BALLS
- provide for the de- elopment of muscle control together with eye, hand and arm coordination.
- provide an opportu- nity for cooperative play.
- allow for the devel- opment of simple rhythms and rhythmi- cal patterns.
BOUNCING BOARDS
- help develop a child's sense of rhythm in conjunction with the sense of balance.
BOXES
- allow for imaginative and creative construction in a dramatic play setting.
- provide an opportunity for climbing and crawling.
GYMNASTIC APPARATUS (swinging-bar, rings, climbing rope)
- offers an opportunity for physical expression in a rhythmical activity which requires complex physical control.
JUNGLE GYM, LADDERS
- offer a possible variety in levels of play, ranging from the solitary type to well- integrated socially cooperative games.
- provide an opportun- ity for acquiring increased bodily bal- ance, control and coordination.
- enable a child to use his/her imagination while physically lo- cating him/herself at different levels.

ROCKING BOATS

- foster the development of co-operative play on a simple level while experiencing a rhythmical activity.

SANDBOX

- provides a medium through which various levels of play can occur including the range from solitary play through highly complex group planning and completion of a chosen project.
- allows a sensory medium to be used in a variety of ways: dramatic, creative, mechanical, imaginary.
- provides a soothing experience while fostering the development of coordination.

SLIDE

- provides an outlet for physical expression and learning bodily control.
- allows the child to feel he/she has accomplished a task successfully.
- allows for a simple level of social interaction.
- promotes a sense of order when taking turns.

SWING

- provides for social interaction while fostering (promoting) balancing and rhythmic development.

TEETER-TOTTER

- allows a child to develop physical skill while pursuing a balancing skill.
- fosters a sense of responsibility for another's well-being.

WATER

- provides a stimulating yet relaxing medium for the expression of fantasy and experimentation of physical properties.
- promotes a social experience which fosters hand-eye coordination.
- offers many possibilities for exploration while demanding little skill from the young learner.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WAYS TO USE THE INFORMATION IN THIS ARTICLE:

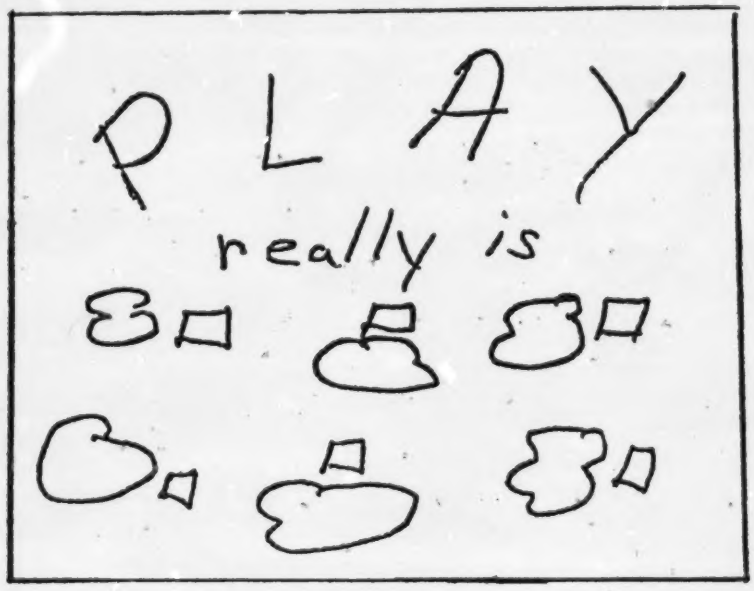
1. Take slide pictures of your children "in action" in the various play activities. Show them at a parent meeting while you accompany the slides with an oral narrative of the types of learning which can occur through their child's use of the equipment.

2. In a weekly newsletter to parents include information about the values of one piece of equipment and what their child is learning by using it. Choose a different piece of equipment each week.

3. At the beginning of the school year or at "Kindergarten Roundup" time in the spring, take the parents on a tour around the kindergarten room explaining the values of the various pieces of equipment. A variation would be to have information posted in each of the areas of the room where parents could read it as they move about the room.

4. Include this information in a Kindergarten Parent Handbook so parents may have a reference resource. A suggested title might be "When your child says s/he played at school . . ."

5. Make a bulletin board out in the hall where other faculty members as well as parents can read it. Cut out pictures of play equipment and post the values for each piece next to it.



6. Cut out, mount and display the PLAY letters from this article where others can read it.

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PLAY IN THE KINDERGARTEN: A CLARIFICATION[1]

By

Agnes E. Griffith, Ph.D.
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Play in the kindergarten may be considered an issue in genuine need of careful clarification. A teacher's view of play results from her orientation on a number of related subjects:

(a) The nature of the young child and his learning
(b) The definition of play
(c) Practical considerations

(a) The Nature of the Young Child and His Learning

The young child can be viewed as a keen participant in life, an energetic seeker of new experiences, and a dynamic actor who has a significant effect on his environment. Or he may be viewed as a passive reactor, an organism that must be fed information previously digested for it. Whichever view is held will determine the teacher's approach to creating learning situations for the young child.

Dissatisfied with traditional explanations of motivation, Robert W. White (1959) proposed the concept of competence--effective interaction with the environment, and its motivational aspect, effectance--the organism's inherent tendency toward interacting with the environment. Satisfaction of this persistent, intrinsic need to interact is met by transactions with the environment; activity is satisfying in its own right. It is through such selective activity that the child adapts and learns. D. Bruce Gardner (1971) describes the child thus:

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[1]The author appreciates the contributions to this paper of Lu Ann Felton, kindergarten teacher at the Whitney Elementary School, Green Bay, Wisconsin. However, the author accepts full responsibility for the content and views in the paper.

> ... an actor in all the best senses of the word, a very active kind of actor who brings in from the world around him a multitude of stimulations, and acts upon these stimulations in employing a variety of alternative behaviors. ... The child is an active seeker of stimulation from the outside world rather than the passive recipient of stimuli. ... In addition, I see the child as having a very active, selective filtering system. He not only pulls things in from the outside world, he actively participates in choices of what he will and what he will not pull in. (p. 63)

The psycho-social aspect of development has been characterized by Erik H. Erikson (1963) as a series of stages. If all goes well, the infant develops a sense of trust in the world, and the toddler develops a sense of autonomy--a sense of an independent, worthy self. The healthy pre-school child displays initiative; he pursues a task for the sake of being active. The school-age child develops a sense of industry; he derives pleasure from the completion of a task. Within this sequence, it seems clear that the kindergarten child is in two stages simultaneously; he still finds activity satisfying, and he is moving toward finding pleasure in task completion. Thus, the identification of appropriate tasks for the active kindergarten child becomes decisive.

The work of Jean Piaget emphasizes the critical importance of the young child's motoric interaction with his world. The nature of the kindergarten child's thought processes requires activity.

> Experience is always necessary for intellectual development ... The subject must always be active, must transform things, and find the structure of his own actions on the objects. (Piaget, 1964, p. 4)

Verbal instruction does not substitute for the young child's need to touch, to feel, and to manipulate.

> Children should be able to do their own experimenting and their own research. ... Every time we teach a child something, we keep him from inventing it himself. (Piaget, 1972, p. 27)

Another characteristic of the young child's mode of thought is egocentricity; the child is unable to understand another's point of view. Piaget suggests that interaction with other children is an effective method of socializing thought.

> ... doing things in social collaboration, in a group effort ... leads to a critical frame of mind, where children must cooperate with each other. This is an essential factor in intellectual development. (Piaget, 1964, p. 4)

In addition to the general characteristics of the developmental level, individual rates and styles emerge within each stage. Children progress through the stages slowly or quickly. They may be characterized as "pluggers" or "flitters," or they may be task-oriented or people-oriented. Indeed, their styles may vary across situations. The teacher's formidable challenge is to create a suitable match between each child and each task.

(b) The Definition of Play

The teacher's conception of play may be somewhat analogous to the blind man's definition of an elephant: it is dependent on past experience and present position. In the history of early childhood education, there was a period when the psychoanalytic theory of play was paramount. The teacher was expected to set the stage, allow the children to express their feelings, and record their behavior, but not interfere in their play. (Spodek, 1974) The teacher was cast more as a therapist and the child, however healthy, as a patient. This condition in the field may have led many to reject play as a rich and natural source of learning experiences. Some kindergarten teachers familiar with this earlier approach may think that unbridled self-expression continues to be the dominant purpose of play in early childhood education. Such is not the case. (Minkovitch, 1972) A number of concurrent events--Sputnik, the civil rights movement, a more dynamic view of the learning process (Hunt, 1961), a renewed focus on the crucial importance of the early years (Bloom, 1964), and the direct implications of Jean Piaget's work--resulted in a greater emphasis on cognitive development, and consequently, a more balance approach to the role of play in school settings.

Teachers may have had no previous opportunity to learn the true value of play in the kindergarten. Perhaps their courses and their student-teaching assignments included no such component.

The teacher's current job assignment may require a prescriptive approach to the children's acquisition of skills and information. Thus, a schedule that includes substantial time for play may seem to be precluded automatically. The teacher's perception of play may also be a reflection of these circumstances.

There are as many valid approaches to play in the kindergarten as there are teachers and programs. A teacher may integrate play into her program in the manner that best suits her values and goals, the characteristics and needs of her pupils, and the constraints of the school situation.

Three approaches to a consideration of play may provide an opportunity for thoughtful assessment of this aspect of kindergarten programs. Eva Neumann's (1971) three criteria for play, each on a continuum, offer a useful approach to defining play:

1. Control. Internal control denotes play. External control denotes work. An activity may fall anywhere between the two.
   For example, a child may choose to use a truck with the blocks. As long as he controls his activity, it is play. When he shares the control, e.g., with another child or with the teacher, the activity moves along the continuum from play toward work.

2. Reality. Internal reality denotes play. External reality denotes work. The child's activity may fit anywhere along the continuum.
   As an example, the child who is pretending is adhering to an internal reality. When he accommodates to external reality, he moves toward work.

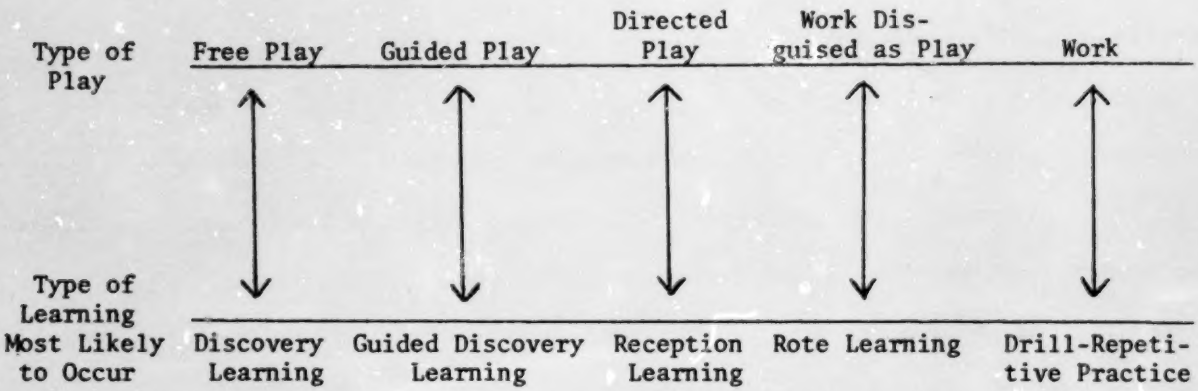
3. Motivation. Internal motivation denotes play. External motivation denotes work. The child's activity usually falls between the two.
   If a child crayons on his own initiative, it is play. If his teacher assigns a crayoning, it is work.

It is clear that the child's activities usually fall between the two ends of each continuum. Although a teacher may not accept the specific differentiations between work and play, she may find it helpful to rate her kindergarten program on these three criteria--control, reality, and motivation--to characterize her primary orientation to learning situations for young children.

Doris Sponseller (1974) has presented a play and learning continuum based on two dimensions: "... the degree to which active adult guidance is provided and whether the area of emphasis is on process or product." (p. 120)

Figure 1

THE CONTINUUM OF PLAY AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES
AND THEIR INTERRELATIONSHIP



(From D. Sponseller, "A Schema for Play and for Learning," in D. Sponseller (ed.) Play as a Learning Medium. Copyrighted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1974.)

The teacher can arrange for a variety of activities issuing from the goals of the program and from the nature of the disciplines presented. A science experience lends itself well to a discovery approach, whereas learning the alphabet letters in sequence may require drill and repetitive practice. A child may engage in a range of play experiences within the same day.

Sponseller describes guided play as primarily self-directed with the teacher providing the initial direction. The goal of guided play is the development of cognitive skills; a loosely organized group game serves as an example. The teacher is the leader throughout directed play. The types of learning most valued by the teacher will determine in large measure the emphasis on play in the program.

Each teacher must decide whether or not it is appropriate to disguise work as play. The decision will be determined by the goals of the program, the intrinsic motivation of the children, external pressures on the teacher, and the teacher's own attitude toward work. If tasks can be presented honestly to children in an appropriate form and with due consideration of their attention span and their capacities, a healthy attitude toward work may develop. To some, the representation of work as play may suggest hypocrisy and a patronizing attitude toward children.

Each of these activities--work and play--is a legitimate enterprise. Neumann and Sponseller have provided valuable discussions of play in relation to work. Millie Almy (1964) focused on two kinds of play within the context of intellectual development. The first is spontaneous play--initiated by the child and given structure by the child's interests and imagination only--closely related to Neumann's definition of play with internal control, reality, and motivation--and comparable to Sponseller's free play. Almy's second type of play consists of adult-prescribed activity--"initiated and directed by the nature of the equipment." (p. 266) It is difficult to imagine any play in an environment designed by a teacher that is entirely free of the influence of the equipment included by that teacher. Nonetheless, Almy's conception of adult-prescribed play seems to resemble work in the Neumann and Sponseller schemes.

Almy suggests that the teacher strengthen her knowledge of the children's cognitive functioning and style to enable her to assess the children's activity and needs in this area of development. The teacher must be able to describe precisely the concepts involved in the ongoing activities. With such an approach she will be able to achieve the optimal balance in her program between spontaneous and structured activities.

(c) Some Practical Considerations

The kindergarten teacher is the architect of the environment and the designer of the program. Often it is her sole responsibility to implement goals for the children. The teacher must appreciate the nature of the young child as well as the processes of cognitive development and translate these unerringly into the nuts and bolts of a daily program with a sense of developmental direction.

Teachers are all too familiar with the practical considerations of budget, space, time, stamina, and the ratio of teacher to children. Often the architect of the environment must build with limited equipment and inadequate space. But there are ways to devise equipment or to supplement a budget with funds from a parents' group, and

there are innumerable approaches to the use of space. A reappraisal of program goals may result in the elimination of some tables and chairs. A guitar could substitute for the piano, and the teacher's desk might be removed. The remaining space can be divided into discrete areas with an underlying respect for adjacent activities and manageable traffic patterns.

Time is an essential ingredient in all development; this is no less true of the cognitive processes than it is of social or physical growth. The kindergarten child needs time to interact with a challenging, compassionate school setting. A review of the schedule may reveal activities that can be minimized or deleted. How valuable is the formal ritual of the Pledge of Allegiance, the weather, and the calendar day after day and week after week? Could Show and Tell be limited to one day a week? Could the children go to the bathroom individually rather than in a group? Is each filmstrip worthy of the time it takes? Such an assessment by each teacher of her own program may result in enough time each day to provide an adequate period for constructive play.

The question of stamina and of the unfavorable adult-child ratios in many kindergartens must be introduced. As the teacher gains in experience, she loses in her reservoir of endurance. Teachers of young children "burn out" early. There are ways to supplement the number of adults with parents and other volunteers. The teacher can run her program so efficiently that she has more time for direct interaction with the children.

In spite of these measures, the kindergarten teacher may be faced with the most demanding, significant, lonely assignment in the elementary school. There are ways that she can provide substantial play-learning experiences without consistently overextending herself, exhausting the school budget, or offending the custodial staff. Three areas of program development are suggested.

It may seem the ultimate paradox in a paper on play to suggest the introduction of Workjobs (Baratta-Lorton, 1972) into the kindergarten program. However, these manipulative activities provide the child the opportunity to experiment with materials

and to discover a concept in a concrete manner. The child manipulates familiar objects--paperclips, colored cubes, pictures--in a matching task, a logical story sequence, or a classification exercise. Workjobs are an inexpensive, valid tool for the development of language and mathematics. The teacher determines the specific tasks, the routines, schedule, and record-keeping for her group of children. Through Workjobs, the kindergarten program can move to an individualized approach in which the child is constructively active during the entire work period. Thus, the child's need to experiment first-hand, to transform things, and to discover concepts in his learning (Piaget, 1964, 1972) is given a measure of recognition.

The second suggested area of program development centers on the addition of unit blocks to the kindergarten. While the most expensive suggestion, a set of hardwood unit blocks should last a generation with care. It is clear that the study of mathematics (e.g., fractions), science (e.g., balance), and social studies (e.g., people and their work) can be enhanced significantly through the medium of unit blocks. (Hirsch, 1974) Block play requires space and time, but the possibilities for learning are endless. Again, each teacher can determine her own use of the material; if blocks are perceived as a constructive material by the teacher, there is no reason to expect that children will put them to destructive uses.

Finally, the teacher is encouraged to enrich the housekeeping corner and to encourage play there, particularly if the children in her group are members of our disadvantaged population. Smilansky's (1968, 1971) recent cross-cultural work has revealed that young children do not automatically engage in sociodramatic play, especially if they are disadvantaged. The values of such play for learning focus on 1) the symbolism inherent in make-believe (e.g., a "bus driver's" movements of taking money and handing out tickets), and 2) the verbalization and interchange of ideas involved. The importance of the role of symbolism in the conceptualization of ideas and in reading cannot be underestimated. The verbal interaction and exchange of ideas among children provide the social collaboration that Piaget has stressed; it

is through such behaviors that the egocentric thought of the young child becomes socialized.

The three areas suggested--Workjobs, unit blocks, and sociodramatic play--require less direct supervision than many play activities and can result in rich learning experiences for young children. The kindergarten teacher needs to feel no less professional in providing such activities for five-year-olds than the high school biology teacher feels in providing laboratory experiences for teenagers. What <u>is</u> unprofessional is the inability of either teacher to account with precision and clarity for the learnings taking place in each pupil's activities.

The young child can learn through thoughtfully chosen play activities. Indeed, the very nature of his learning indicates that genuine interaction with a carefully constructed environment leads to the most effective learning. The significant challenge to each teacher lies in the creation of a relaxed, responsible kindergarten setting that provides each child an opportunity to learn well through play.

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THE TEACHER'S ROLE WHEN CHILDREN PLAY: A MODEL

by

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What does the kindergarten teacher do when children play? Should s/he play with the children, make suggestions, fade into the background, watch and assess? Are we manipulating children if we take action? Are we "teaching" if we sit back?

Some would advocate no guidance at all on the teacher's part, except where children's safety is concerned, opining that to do so would be to interfere in the creativity, freedom, autonomy and imagination that occurs in a free play setting. Others would point out that some adult direction, responsibly given, is as necessary as it is in any activity in the classroom if optimum learning is to occur. Some would program the action to fit predetermined curricular objectives, justifying this by classifying play as a teaching-learning activity and viewing the teacher as a manager or programmer. Many would view the teacher as a catalyst whose responsibility is to arrange the environment and then step back to watch.

One has only to read the literature to find justification for each viewpoint and experience tells us that all of them may have merit when applied appropriately to given situations and children. Yet the role of the teacher becomes diverse and multidimensional, defying a simple definition, if one is to encompass all these views.

It is the purpose of this paper to present a model that reflects a philosophy both eclectic and assertive about the teacher's role. It presumes a knowledge and sensitivity on the part of the teacher about play and child development, about children's needs in an educational setting, and it requires the assumption of pedagogical responsibility for guiding play.

The teacher is identified, in an acronym, as a M.O.D.E.L.: Manager, Observer, Designer, Evaluator, and Leader.

Manager

M

The teacher as manager sets the stage for play. The physical setting is arranged to stimulate appropriate play behaviors in the children.

Observer

O

The teacher steps aside to watch the children for the purpose of perceiving their behavior, interaction and use of the props. Notes are used to record as objectively as possible what happened so that a study can be made of children's needs.

Designer

D

The time schedule and the available space must encourage a variety of play. The teacher is the one who must provide the design. Planning is the key.

Evaluator

E

Note taking and observing lead naturally to studying and deciding about children's needs. Plans and teacher actions grow out of sensitive evaluation.

Leader

L

The teacher becomes responsibly involved in children's play by modeling, guiding, suggesting, or restraining their behaviors.

MANAGER:

The teacher sets the stage before the children arrive by arranging play equipment, adding new props and providing mini-sets where needed. Although the room or the play yard has a generally permanent arrangement of equipment and interest centers, children need changing stimuli. Examples might be:

1. Set the table in the housekeeping corner to suggest a coffee break, meal time, or baking activity.
2. Place a tricycle, fire hat, and piece of hose near a partially completed block construction.

3. Place an empty plastic detergent bottle and a towel on the doll house sink.
4. Outdoors, hang a clothesline and place, nearby, a pan of soapy water and some clothes to wash.
5. Rearrange movable outdoor climbing and crawling equipment to encourage new dramatic play or muscle use.
6. Leave a partially worked puzzle or some small blocks invitingly arranged on a table.

As children play, the teacher can further manage the environment by adding props, rearranging settings, and straightening disarray.

For example, if the tricycle, fire hat and piece of hose lead one youngster into a fire fighter role that requires some help from a traffic policeman, a police hat and whistle can be provided. If more fire fighters arrive, more fire hats and hose can be added.

It is not uncommon for children to leave a clutter of equipment when they are through with a role. A teacher who quietly straightens the area or rearranges it again stimulates others to play. Sometimes the disarray suggests the setting failed and a sensitive teacher will alter the original setting slightly. For instance, a coffee pot set on the stove with other pots and pans may be brushed aside but, if placed on the table with two cups and saucers, may invite a coffee break.

"Prop boxes" can be offered, suggested, or simply set in strategic places to be used or moved around by children as they play. (Bender, 1971)

OBSERVER:

Stepping aside to watch children in action in order to perceive behavior, interaction, and the use of props is critical to all the roles in this model. Sensitivity to children's needs cannot occur without it. Observation should take the teacher's whole attention, for a teacher who is directing a group activity, game or other classroom action is attending to the task at hand and cannot concentrate

completely on observing. Time segments need not be long, even five to ten minutes will be valuable.

Recording what is seen is a necessary tool. It permits, later, more reflective evaluation, and it prevents the distortion that memory can cause. Anecdotal notes are one effective way of preserving what has been seen. They are a convenient way to ensure an objective record, and unlike other forms, such as checklists or rating forms, they provide a running account of the action. It takes very little effort to master the technique and requires no expensive equipment.

Attention can be given, in the observation, to a group, recording interaction and conversation in whatever sequence it occurs, or to a single child playing alone or as part of the group. Sites, or children, can be chosen at random or the teacher may choose to note the effect of a particular setting or prop.

It may be helpful to plan observation when a volunteer or aide is available to fend routine needs of children; some teachers have trained their aides to take anecdotal notes for them.

Carrying a pencil and a few index cards (4" x 6" or larger) in a pocket at all times during the play period is useful. Then, when observing, one can pull out a blank card, quickly write the child's name, date and activity on the top and record what was seen and heard.

Example

Mary
June 3
Housekeeping corner

Mary discovered the empty detergent bottle on the sink as she removed the dishes from the table. Turning to John, she announced briskly, "Here's the soap, John; you wash and I'll dry." When John made a face and walked away, she stamped her foot and shouted, "That's not fair. I always have to do the dishes. You should help, too."

Some teachers prefer a notebook but, regardless of the format, notes should be as simple and specific as possible. The object is to faithfully record what happened without judging or evaluating.

A simple record of the breadth and depth of children's activities with a checklist might look like this:

Example 1

Name	Date	Time	Activity
Sue B.	6/10	9:00 - 9:30	Easels
Jack B.	6/10	9:15 - 9:45	Blocks
Ann C.	6/10	9:00 - 9:30	Puzzles
Kevin C.	6/10	9:15 - 9:30	Blocks

Example 2

Name	Time	Role
Sue	9:00 - 9:30	Mother
Pam	9:00 - 9:45	Baby
Jack	9:15 - 9:30	Son
José	9:00 - 9:15	Father

DESIGNER:

A room crowded with furniture or didactic materials is not a play environment. When play is important, there will be open spaces for movement and priority will be given to play equipment in the occupied spaces. Whether an interest center or a learning center approach is used, the various settings will include play as well as academic stagings. Likewise, time will be allocated in large enough blocks on a daily basis to allow children to change or give in-depth attention to an activity. Time will not be available only when other work is complete, or as a transition

between other activities, or on a once-a-week basis. The teacher will provide, literally, a "play room" and a 30-60 minute block of free choice time each day.

In the designer role a "lesson plan" is one of the teacher's responsibilities. Objectives will be identified to meet children's growth needs and materials will be identified. Although the procedure, so typical in traditional lesson plans, is inappropriate for a play plan because it might tend to program children's actions, teachers' interactions can be prethought and children's reactions to and use of particular settings can be anticipated. The needs of particular children to join a group, be accepted in a group, receive help in fantasizing, etc., can be anticipated and alternative teacher strategies planned. Such planning strengthens later teacher guidance by reducing the chance factor in the spontaneous decisions made as children play. Plans will include weekly, daily, and long-range perspectives. (See sample lesson plans on pages 30 and 31.)

Varying levels and types of play will be included, from high fantasy to manipulative, from imitative to creative, from socio-dramatic to games with rules, from large muscle to fine muscle, from solitary to cooperative. Academic learnings will be included and the design will include affective, social, and skill learnings.

Related to setting the stage with physical arrangements is a facet of teaching which considers experiential backgrounds of children. Without experiences, children have little to dramatize. Direct and vicarious experiences are the food for play. A field trip, a story, a film, give children ideas for enactments. These can be used as initial stimuli or as an added nourishment for play that has run down. In one classroom where block and wheel toy play seemed to hit the same plateau every day, a trip to a nearby garage provided the necessary change. Children came back to build a ramp and gas pumps. Oil cans were added and charge cards, tire pumps, and maps appeared. Social studies and science learnings were natural outgrowths.

EVALUATOR:

In studying the checklists kept of the block area over a period of weeks, one

might find that Al has never joined in the block building although he has appeared to watch frequently what Tom and Joe have been doing. The teacher may conclude that Al is interested and needs some encouragement in that direction. Likewise, when reading an accumulation of anecdotal notes about Mary, one might see a pattern of behavior which indicates she always leads and thus conclude that she needs to learn to follow once in a while. The teacher might evaluate the results of the play lesson plan with this type of thinking:

"Puzzles on table too hard--tomorrow try two others with three of these.

"Books on workbench started some good construction of scooters and boats. Ted, George B., Jeff were especially excited. Their constructions were much more imaginative and they seemed more satisfied than they have been for days. Needed some cloth for sails--promised some for tomorrow. I wonder how Bill S. would react if I could entice him to that area?

"Miriam and Betty P. were delighted to have own 'house'. Called girls for coffee but needed my help in keeping 'kaffee klatsche' going. Try again tomorrow.

"Billy delivered milk only once and quit. Is he ready to try again? Should I set up a possibility in the block play, or leave him alone? He didn't seem too pleased with himself as a milkman. At least the girls welcomed him instead of rejecting him. Not sure what concepts he has of community and family life.

"Good concepts and problem solving going on in most areas with most children. Try same procedures and materials tomorrow.

"Did I say too much as I walked around? Perhaps I should just smile tomorrow and speak only when spoken to?

"Tommy seemed satisfied with the pounding table and was able to return to block play a little calmer. Todd may need something further; although the pounding seemed to satisfy at first, he soon tossed down the hammer and left appearing about as impatient as before. Perhaps if I had been free to guide him from there to the clay table it might have helped. He does need some outlet so badly--something involving more gross body movement and space--but what?"

Without evaluation, children's learning may sidetrack or decrease. In the play MODEL flexible planning and appropriate stage setting, as well as sensitive leadership, is dependent upon it.

Evaluation grows naturally out of observation and note taking. It calls for a careful perusal of notes; it may include discussions with parents, other teachers, or aides. A contemplation of behaviors, both adult and child, is called for. When

at length an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses in the play learnings is made, a decision comes forth which affects the management, designer, and leadership roles. If the setting was weak, then management will change that; if adult guidance seemed inappropriate, planning can change subsequent actions. When conclusions are not decisive, even the identification of needs or the raising of questions can lead to trial changes that might improve learning.

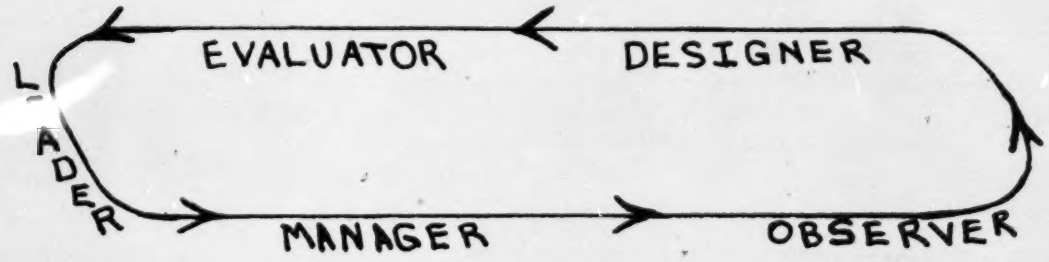
LEADER:

Leadership in children's play probably causes as much controversy among teachers as any teaching behavior can because it is in this role that it is feared children might be manipulated. In this model it is assumed that the responsible teacher will become directly involved and provide whatever suggestions, model, guidance, or restraint that can be sensitively provided. This might take a variety of forms. For instance:

1. The teacher might join the play and say to those in the housekeeping corner, "Good morning. I am your Avon Lady. May I come in?", or to those busy with block constructions, "Hello. Where do you want this load of cement?", followed in both cases by a short period of appropriate play in the group.
2. A child might be helped to join a group if the teacher provides a prop and the comment, "Tom has some milk to deliver to your house. How much do you need?", or "Why don't you call Mary on the phone? She just moved next door, and I know she'd like to come over for a visit."
3. Direction can be given to a floundering group by giving them a new prop to use or making a comment to change the direction of the play. "You have such a high building here, I wonder if you'd like to have this rope and pulley to make an elevator?", or "Would you like me to make some signs to put in the window of your store?", or "Do you remember our trip to _____? What did the _____ do there?"

The important ingredients in the leadership role are the teacher's timing and sensitivity. Too much adult direction can stifle the naturalness of children's enactments, and too long involvement by the teacher or the inappropriate suggestion can over-program the acting. While the examples given here have been of leadership in children's socio-dramatic play, over-direction in any type of play can have a deleterious effect. However, when teachers observe carefully, understand developmental stages and individual needs, such difficulties can be avoided.

The roles in this MODEL have been described without any particular order, but one could actually order them in a procedure in which planning and setting the stage would occur first, followed by observation, leadership, and evaluation. If imagined, as drawn, in a hoop diagram rather than a series of steps, then evaluation would precede planning and each successive step would lead to the next in a circular fashion; there would be no real beginning or end, but an ongoing fluid motion.



If this MODEL sounds like a description of the traditional kindergarten teacher, active in a play period which is set in a classroom full of socio-dramatic play equipment, and if the roles described resemble those that good teachers everywhere assume when children explore academic experiences, then the message has been well received. When play is a medium for learning, the teacher assumes a variety of teaching roles.

KINDERGARTEN WEEKLY LESSON PLAN

Time and date: week of 3/9
9:00 - 9:45
Group: A.M. group
Teacher: M. Smith

Free Play

Major Objectives:

1. Children will extend and relate concepts of the world about them.
2. Children will practice thinking and social skills, and learn to control emotions.

Specific Objectives:

1. Bill will learn acceptable ways of joining group play.
2. Tom and Kenny will find outlets for their excessive energy while Todd will learn a way to express his impatience and frustration.
3. Miriam and Betty will take a first step in engaging in housekeeping play.
4. Children who engage in the block play, woodworking and shoe store play will be challenged to a new level in problem solving and/or creative thinking.

Special Materials:

1. A plastic squeeze bottle, candles and holders, apron, hot-pad holders, Play-Doh, a few library books to the housekeeping corner.
2. A milkman's cap and bottle carrier, small piece of garden hose and fireman's cap, suitcase to the wheel toys and block area.
3. Some more difficult puzzles from the storeroom.
4. Some wooden button forms to make wheels, scraps of material and leather, and some woodworking books to the woodworking area.

Experiences:

I plan to try some rearrangements of the furniture in the housekeeping corner, as well as the addition of the above "props." Each day I will try to provide a change in the use of table-top toys and materials by putting out some materials in attractive arrangements. Each daily lesson plan will provide a more detailed description.

A visit to the milkman's truck when he delivers our milk and a discussion of how the garagemen fix cars is planned to improve concept learning.

KINDERGARTEN DAILY PLAN

Date and Time: Monday 3/9
9:00
Group: A.M. group
Teacher: M. Smith

Free Play

Objectives: see weekly plan

Materials Needed: (in addition to usual room equipment)

1. Milkman's cap and bottle carrying case (from storeroom)
2. Yellow Play-Doh, plastic squeeze bottle, apron and candles for doll house (Play-Doh from storeroom, I will bring rest)
3. Separate small table and dishes, 2 screens, 1 telephone, 2 chairs (borrow small table from other kindergarten--others are here)

Preparation Before Lesson:

1. Set milkman's cap and bottle carrying case aside for Billy.
2. On separate table near woodworking bench place: heavy cardboard to cover top, large nails in box, three hammers. On floor near table place box of wood scraps and a bag of "wheels."
3. On woodworking bench place two books, Two is a Team and Bobby Sails His Boat.
4. In the doll house, place pieces of Play-Doh in muffin tins and put in oven. Put tablecloth on table with candles and small plant. Place squeeze bottle on sink counter with dishpan (dishes in it) in sink. Lay apron on sink counter top.
5. Set small table (with coffee cups and teapot on top). Two chairs in alcove near storeroom. Put screens around two sides as walls. Telephone on table.
6. Check paints, paper, brushes on easels.
7. Place various shaped gray paper and crayons on art table; clay and clayboards on clay table; 4 harder puzzles from storeroom at puzzle table.

Procedure:

1. As Billy arrives, tell him I have a surprise for him. Show him the milkman's outfit and say I got it out just for him because I know what a fine milkman he would make. Tell him the family in the doll house needs a milk delivery.
2. As Miriam and Betty P. step over to doll house to watch, suggest that they set up housekeeping at the table in the alcove and invite Susie, Mary, and Betty B. to come over for coffee.
3. When Tommy, Todd or Kenny begin to appear impatient in play, take each by the hand to the separate pounding table and suggest he see what a good feeling it is to hit a nail with all his might. Say "good"--"try again, again...again...again" as he does it.
4. As normal play proceeds with rest of group in various areas, comment on the good ideas and solutions to a problem. Occasionally ask how they feel about what they're doing, if the activity is hard or easy, whether they need help. Use the "What can we do to..." approach.

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CLAY - PLAY, YOU, ME AND OTHERS

By

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Let's start kidding ourselves! Play is the child's work world. The adult's world grows from the child's play world and then the adult attempts to aid in directing children's play following developmental requirements. The professional adult has a specific responsibility to fathom with the child, parent and community members each phase in the growth-developmental process. The common sense in this daily home, community and school environment is the word-play and work-play atmosphere that hovers over each situation because of the individuals and social-cultural conditions.

Content concepts early childhood educators consider when aiding the growth process are these developmental behavioral traits:

1. Observation - use of all senses.
2. Venturing - exploring the boundaries provided by adult members.
3. Imitation - encouraging imitation of things seen and sensed in it. play learning territory.
4. Extension - uncovering natural and specie honed tools for magnification of body energy forces.
5. Flexibility and diversions - shifting back and forward following an individual's energetic needs of environmental situations.
6. Verbal and visual symbolic identifications.
7. Mutuality - evolving into the roles of interdependence and independence.

These seven developmental processes were incidently made meaningful to very young children in a kindergarten when a teacher followed this simple ten-minute daily play-material unit.

Unit: Clay - Play, You, Me and Others

Treatment: Foundational

Purposes: To make young children aware of the developmental phases in growth through the personification process.

To stress crucial word labels for the developmental phases and environmental factors.

To observe variations in the group.

To permit variations within the group.

To discuss with parents and community members their recognition of the developmental phases in their lives.

Teacher background:

Professional knowledge of the developmental phases in human growth. These books provide adequate information to transfer personal identification then to child-group recognition.

Childhood and Society. Erik H. Erikson. W.W. Norton and Co., Inc. New York, 1950-63.

Play Its Role in Development and Evolution. Edited by: Jerome S. Bruner, Alison Jolly, Kathy Sylva. Basic Book, Inc. New York, 1976.

Toys and Reasons. Erik H. Erikson. W.W. Norton and Co., Inc. New York, 1976.

Vocabulary for teachers to understand and use:

The children are not responsible for precise use of these words, but when the teacher inserts them in the learning experiences, the initial foundations are made for parent and larger community interchange.

observation	energy	verbal	dislike
sensing	extension	mutual	search
adaptation	diversions	neutral	imitation
limitation	play	like	adventure
recall	variations	tools	manipulate
modeling	tutor prone	pressure	loose

symbols communicate signals growth direction

continuity universals

Learning play center material:

Make available on the initial day of group instruction a clay table with a revolving board. Place on the clay revolving tray adequate amounts of colored clay representing all shades of human skin colors, from dark to light shades.

Have available, with parent signed tags for each child, an empty shoe box, a terry cloth covering, a stick, and a small clay board (8" x 8").

Make certain that the teacher has the exact equipment as each child does, in order to play-adventure each of the following daily experiences with the group.

Focus 1:

Using the individual shoe box container with tools, select from the community clay tray two hand filled balls of clay. Use both left and right hands in grabbing wet clay from the moving tray.

Manipulate these balls of clay in any fashion on the boards. Permit conversation from children and the teacher insert words reflecting the sensory aspects of color, texture, and shape. The teacher should also demonstrate verbal chants related to words such as clay-play-day-work-shirk-pound-found-long-song-shush-hush-sib-nib-work-worst-shift-rift-whack-fact-tool-fool-make-take-name-same.

End the ten-minute clay session with teacher singing the Play song.

"The play way is the best way
to discover me
The play way is the best way
to discover you
So play
Play in your own way and
Discover something new
Say Say
What is your play way?
O K
Let's Play your way."

Playway Handbook,
Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973.

Place a damp terry cloth covering over each person's clay shape. Keep board, clay, stick and shoe box in a spot where each child and the teacher may find it on the following day.

Focus 2:

The teacher and children resume clay play on the individual boards. The instructor directs attention to the name tag on the shoe box that contains the handwriting of the parents.

While the group is manipulating the clay shape, the teacher makes a lumpy baby and tells the children how he/she was named. Encourage the children to discuss how they think they got their names from their parents. The teacher humorously tells the children that she or he can't remember being a baby, but family members have told many things about those days when he/she was an infant.

Name your clay shape at the end of this session with these names: first name - Family; middle name - Neutral; last name - Girl or Boy, depending on gender of the teacher. Encourage each child to give a name to their clay form. Write in any fashion, preferably the style-type parents used on the child's name tag. During the day the teacher makes name tags for each box demonstrating cursive writing, manuscript, typewriter print, decorative print, and misspelled print for each child's project. Glue these name tags on the side of the shoe box with a blank paper for children to scribble on and copy the name in following play periods.

Focus 3:

Open the clay play session with verbal name interchange, in recognition of the clay forms. Make a sing-song minimal sound change rhyming activity out of these names. Examples: girl, swirl, boy, toy, coy, neutral, putral, baby and maybe.

End the session with giving the instructor's clay form a nickname called, "Neuty." Laugh about this as you word play with children. Suggested vocabulary: neuty, pukey, suky, sooty, soupy, snitch, snoopy, snobby, snooge, snippy, sneaky, snappy, and sneezey. Cover words related to diverse forms of human behavior.

Focus 4:

As the teacher plays with the children and his/her clay form, throw out these questions:

Wonder if Neuty heard what I did with names?

Did Neuty notice the first, middle and last names?

Did Neuty hear the names given other clay forms?

How did Neuty feel about the names?

Extract from children an emotional reaction to names and the use of the word feel. After emotional interpretation is established, translate to tactile or body parts that react to extremely constrasting objects which cause nerve and muscular reactions such as: hot-cold objects, rough-smooth surfaces, and others. Indicate the function of skin, nose, eyes, and ears for relating to the environmental objects.

Summarize this session by indicating that your clay Neuty feels with these specific parts of his body and grows into thinking about the world.

Focus 5:

Demonstrate your shaping of the clay form and make an extended nose. Recall prior demonstration discussion of emotional reactions and gently sniff out putrid smells that give Neuty an upset stomach. Draw out children's verbal experience with stomach aches, navel, nose, belly, abdomen, mouth, throat, gullet, appetite, esophagus, vomit, mental attitude, likes and dislikes.

The nose and abdomen of the teacher's clay form should be very prominent.

If any member of the group indicates feelings of dislike to the human excretion process, spend necessary periods to perhaps disentangle any unnecessary emotional barriers that may hamper wholesome encounters with these daily needs.

Focus 6:

Demonstrate the use of the stick for designing specific features on the teacher's clay model. Encourage children to imitate and venture designs of their own.

In several play sessions following the use of the stick for shaping the clay figure, expand to include clothes. Make use of any simple tools, scissors, stapler, dull knives, and light hammers. Provide an assortment of cloth, paper, wood and plants for decorating the clay child. Remember after each session to carefully place a damp cloth over the object before returning it to each owner's shoe box.

Focus 7:

Direct attention to shoe box container housing the clay child. Establish the transfer of house concept to this object and proceed to play with the children how all of us have been foster parents to the personified clay object.

Should the teacher be successful in motivating the young children in this learning play experience, then the following may be used for additional clay play periods.

a) Experience a mutual visitation to a classmate's shoe box (home).

b) Dress the clay tangible for a special ritual that is observed in the community.

c) Construct a sibling for the clay model.

d) Over the weekend period have an accident occur to several of the clay models. The instructor's clay form should also have an accident. Select children with a wide range of emotional reactions for the group to observe individual variations. Note the emotional and verbal reactions. Arrange a class community decision on some reasonable way to handle this problem.

e) Establish rights of privacy for each clay character and felt need to form a social circle and group play.

f) Identify with each child specific descriptive traits they verbalize for their clay child. Write these down and hold a group discussion.

g) Identify with the teacher model a strong humorous situation. Expand this until children expose laughter from a giggle, to hee haw, ha ha, to a quiet smile.

h) Explore with individuals the dreams, skills, ambitions, games, songs, and fears that each clay model may pretend to exhibit through the child's eyes and experiences.

i) Prepare the children and their parents that this clay object of play is coming home to live in a new environment. Discuss how it will need to adjust to this different space and if it will need to recognize other individuals living in the home.

Resources:

Films:

Throughout the time expose children to these films that may influence further play with clay and family interactions.

An Alphabet of Animals	0913 BAVI
Clay	0029 BAVI
Crowboy	0495 BAVI
Evan's Corner	7716 BAVI
The Hand	7866 BAVI
Matrioska	3933 BAVI
Sand Castle	BAVI (not indexed as of this date)
Searching Eye	7535 BAVI
Slice of Bread	8688 BAVI
Smile	4279 BAVI
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Will Baum
Addison-Wesley, 1969

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Margaret Rey
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Houghton Mifflin, 1966

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Ann McGovern
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Magic Circle Press, 1977

For Me to Say
David McCord
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Little, Brown & Company, 1970

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Betsy Byars
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I Can Be Anything You Can Be
Joel Rothman
Illustrated by Susan Perl
Scroll Press, 1973

I Can Fly
Ruth Kraus
Illustrated by Mary Blain
Simon and Schuster, 1950

Little Girl and Her Mother
Beatrice Schenk DeRegniers
Illustrated by Esther Gilman
Vanguard Press, 1963

My Special Best Words
John Steptoe
Viking, 1974

Peter Bull
Helen Oechsli
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Shapes and Things
Tana Hoban
Macmillan Company, 1970

Someone Could Win a Polar Bear
John Ciardi
Drawings by Edward Gorey
Lippincott, 1970

Something Small
Anita Lobel
Illustrated by Anita Lobel
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Swimmy
Leo Lionni
Pantheon, 1964

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney
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Walk Home Tired, Billy Jenkins
Ianthe Thomas
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Harper & Row, 1974

PROBLEM SOLVING IN PLAY

By

Pat Schwanke
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"I'll be the driver and you be the policeman. You have to get us to stop."

"No, that's not the way you do it. It has to go like this so you can pull it up and down."

Anyone who has heard remarks like this from kindergarten children has no doubt that young children can and do solve problems. In their play with objects and with each other, they continually create and then solve their own problems.

Problem solving is evident in all types of children's play. A jig-saw puzzle presents a problem which requires decisions and anaylsis. Block construction or the use of props in socio-dramatic play calls for creative judgment. A child saying to another, "I'll be the mama and you be the baby and you be naughty," is creating a problem, and as children play out the assigned roles, they are solving and creating more problems.

Kindergarten teachers have long been catalysts for children's thinking during play. Before the emergence of the subject-matter curriculum, there was a certain professional pride in the ability of early childhood educators to create a climate in the classroom for problem solving. Today, there is new evidence of the value of play. There is evolving a concern for processes rather than content in curriculum, and there are new ways for defining and categorizing thinking.

One useful schema appears in Sanders' (1966) Classroom Questions: What Kinds?, based in turn upon Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals, Handbook I: Cognitive Domain. Neither Sanders nor

Bloom were thinking of kindergarten children particularly, but the hierarchy they developed has great utility for kindergarten teachers. Thinking defined in the Sanders' categories (with definitions simplified somewhat for purposes of this discussion) are as follows:

1. Memory: The child recalls or recognizes information.
2. Translation: The child changes information into another symbol system.
3. Interpretation: The child sees relationships (classifies, compares, sees implications, grasps mathematical relationships).
4. Application: The child transfers knowledge in a lifelike problem solving situation.
5. Analysis: The child solves a problem with conscious knowledge of the type of reasoning used.
6. Synthesis: The child uses creative thinking skills (imagination or the "as if" dimension, divergent thinking, or solves a problem) which results in a unique product.
7. Evaluation: The child makes a value judgment using a set of criteria or standards.

Problem solving in this hierarchy can be identified as application, analysis and synthesis, with application being the simplest form and synthesis the most complex.

Imagine a kindergarten scene where a child at play with blocks is approached by a child who wants those blocks. The first child has a problem: "How can I keep these blocks for myself?" Solution "A" might be to say, "These blocks are mine. You can't have them."

Solution "B" might be to say, "You don't want these blocks. They're too big for your truck. Take those little ones in the basket over there."

Solution "A" is an example of the application level of thinking. Knowing that the child is not speaking literally, for he does not own the blocks, we realize he is applying a previously learned classroom rule (first come, first serve) which

allows the first player at the scene the right to play with something for a while without sharing.

The second solution utilizes creative thinking; the approaching child has been anticipated as a more formidable opponent and successfully redirected rather than blocked.

While children will spontaneously use all levels of thinking, Sanders points out that classroom teaching needs to be oriented toward the higher levels on the hierarchy. Classrooms which stimulate higher level thinking then encourage more thinking, for in a hierarchy, higher levels incorporate within them prior levels. If a child is solving a problem at the synthesis level, application and analysis thinking also occurs. In the block playing example when the child applied the rule, first come, first serve, the lowest thinking level was also employed for the rule had to be remembered to be applied.

Good instruction will not leave thinking to chance but will insure that thinking opportunities occur. For instance, instead of directing actions, teachers can ask questions so that children identify and seek varying solutions to problems. Objects or props can be introduced that lead children to think as they use them. One can enter the play situation as a player and guide the level of thinking. The choice and arrangement of the play equipment can be skillfully planned to stimulate situations and ideas that lead to the type of thinking desired.

This author observed the following incident in a classroom for four-year-olds. The teacher walked into the center of the open play space, at first unnoticed by the children playing busily around the periphery. She carried a cardboard box, a stick, a length of rope and a jar of paste. Sitting down on the floor, she began busily to turn the box this way and that, occasionally holding the rope and then the stick against it. Saying nothing, she managed with facial expressions and quiet sounds to convey her puzzlement and frustration.

It wasn't long before several children were gathered around her asking, "What's the matter, Mrs. G_____?", "What are you doing, teacher?" Finally with a sigh, she

told them that she was trying to make a wagon, but she couldn't find a way to fasten a handle on it. The problem was discussed, more materials were tried, and eventually the rope was tied through a hole in the box. The "wagon" was used to transport blocks for several days.

This activity led to the construction of more "wagons" for more purposes and to the use of boxes as beds, as houses, as hideaways. A chain reaction occurred in which children set up and solved problems for weeks. No attempt was made in this instance to analyze the levels of thinking, but the teacher did create a climate in which she fostered children's problem solving behaviors.

As an example of how children's spontaneous play behaviors can be analyzed according to the schema, consider another classroom occurrence. The teacher, in arranging the play setting before the children arrived, placed an empty white detergent bottle on the sink cupboard in the housekeeping center. From observation notes of children's play with that object, the following analysis can be made:

Memory: (Children repeat what they have seen others do.)

Sally washed some doll clothes.

Sue and John used the bottle to wash the dishes.

Application: (Children apply their knowledge of the properties of a plastic squeeze bottle by using it in a slightly different way.)

Faith used it to wash her hair at the kitchen sink.

Hannah sprinkled clothes as she ironed them.

Synthesis: (Children use the prop in a unique way.)

Tom used it as a ketchup bottle when he was given a "hamburger" for lunch.

June fed the baby doll with it.

While they were fantasizing at play, these children used a prop to fit their differing needs. For Sally, Sue and John, there was no problem; the bottle suited their needs exactly. The other four children found themselves without the proper tool--a problem, and they adapted.

Let's look now, at a play situation where boys and girls are playing garage/filling station. A chair and a hose serve as a gas pump. A cash register is set up within a large cardboard packing case. Several children drive up on tricycles for gas while the station attendant busily pumps gas and takes money. The level of thinking seems to generally be on the memory level. That is, the children seem to be replicating in play the roles and behaviors they have seen at real gas stations.

What might a teacher do to encourage more diverse and higher levels of thinking? One way would be to enter the play as a participant. The teacher might become one of the drivers who needs gas and say, after the gas has been pumped, "Oh, dear! I don't seem to have enough money." The children, who have learned that payment is needed for services, would now have a problem. If ideas lag, the teacher still in the play role, can make some suggestions. The teacher might also participate by applying for a job such as a station attendant requiring children "owners" to decide whether help is needed and whether this applicant will qualify. Subsequently, becoming a novice attendant in need of instruction, the teacher can lead the children into more problem solving situations. Another way would be to introduce more props: empty oil cans, costumes, a tire pump, etc.

The quantity and quality of the questions a teacher asks in the classroom will determine to a large extent the kind of thinking that the children will do. As an example, we could pose three approaches to the following situation.

Several girls are playing in the housekeeping corner. There is a good deal of quarreling, and bumping into furniture, resulting in cooking utensils being knocked to the floor. The teacher walks up to the group to say one of the following:

1. "Girls, it is so crowded in here that I notice you are not playing very happily, and things are being knocked on the floor. I think there are too many people in this small space, Mary, Sue and Betty come with me; I have some things over here I know you will enjoy doing for a while, and then you can return to the kitchen."

2. "Girls, as I've been watching you play I notice that you are not very happy. I think the problem might be that there are too many playing here for the amount of space we have. What do you think we can do about it?"
3. "Girls, you don't seem to be very happy in here. What do you suppose is the problem?"

All three approaches are probably effective for handling on-the-spot behavior. However, what kind of thinking has the teacher elicited from the children in the first example? While giving directives is expedient for fulfilling some educational goals, is it an effective technique for encouraging higher level thinking?

In the second approach the teacher is asking children to apply some knowledge about social interaction in this classroom to solve a specific problem.

In approach number three, she is asking them to identify the problem; sensing problems, identifying problems is a creative (or synthesis) thinking behavior.

Problem solving and play go together. When stimulated by a teacher, children will grow more adept at higher levels of thinking. It is not necessary to throw play out of the kindergarten curriculum in order to make room for cognitive activity. Teachers who believe in the value of play for young children can make it a vehicle for accomplishing cognitive goals.

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Bloom, Benjamin S. Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals, Handbook I: Cognitive Domain. New York: David McKay, 1956.

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EVALUATION OF KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM ISSUES - PLAY

Please complete the following questionnaire on this Issues series and the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide. Check the response that best corresponds to your feeling about the question. All responses will be confidential and will be used to improve the Issues series and the work of the Department of Public Instruction. Thank you very much for returning this questionnaire.

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   ____ Yes, definitely ____ Some of the ideas seem useful ____ Very few of the ideas seem useful

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